

2 SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILLED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

Cuba—The Insurgents Abolish Slavery.

The revolutionists in Cuba have at length hit the keynote to success in decreeing the abolition of slavery. By telegraph we learn that this decree was issued in the Central Department by the Insurgent Assembly of Representatives, and that the freedmen may either become soldiers or remain cultivators of the soil. The effect of this decree must be damaging to the interests of the whole western end of the island, where, as yet, the patriot effort has met with small success. It will cause a great commotion among the thickly settled districts, and must act as it acted upon our territory when Mr. Lincoln issued his emancipation proclamation, and thus broke the backbone of our rebellion.

The insurgents now propose to concentrate their forces and establish the headquarters of their government near Santiago de Cuba, in the southeastern part of the island. Thus the revolution is every day becoming more consolidated and of firmer texture. There is now but one direction for it, and that is onward; for every hatred that ever existed or has been created in the Cubans by Spanish misrule has found opportunity to vent itself and find redress. The efforts of the Spanish troops to suppress the movement are every day becoming more impotent. The rage of the "volunteers"—the wreckers of Cuba, as they may justly be termed—is venting itself in wholesale slaughter that would disgrace even the Government of England in its East India possessions. The Spanish troops are also committing great outrages upon the plantations, and a war of desolation appears to already exist. We have often stated that this would be the policy of Spain when she found that there was no longer a chance of clearing the island. When she leaves it to her own accord it will be in this rich treasure house has been completely wrecked and given over to internal anarchy.

What Business Men Ask.

The merchants, bankers, and business men of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Chicago recently petitioned, simultaneously, for the enactment of a law regulating the transactions of the Treasury with reference to bonds and gold. They asked "that hereafter all purchases or sales of the loans and bonds of the United States, shall be made by inviting public competition through advertising for proposals, and that all sales of gold, for account of the United States, shall be made at public auction by an authorized official of the Treasury Department" after properly advertising the time and place. The petitions to this effect received the signatures of the leading firms and banking officials of the cities named, and undoubtedly reflect the intelligent business opinion of the country.

Mr. Hooper's bill, which passed the House without delay or difficulty, but was quietly smothered by the Finance Committee of the Senate, effectually met these requirements. Its adoption by the Senate would have prevented much scandal, and saved the large sums which favored brokers now receive for doing the work of the Treasury officials. Its efficacy in these respects, we suspect, had something to do with its fate; though the accompanying prohibition of all increase of the gold-interest-bearing debt doubtless contributed to Mr. Sherman's hostility.

The Administration.

The machinery of the new administration is getting into working order, and the operations of the Government go forward with vigor and despatch. The Treasury Department, which is now and must be for some time to come the most important of all, is in excellent hands, and the Internal Revenue Department is under clear, vigorous, and upright control. Mr. Boutwell is universally recognized as an executive officer of unusual ability and as having been qualified by past experience, as well as by a course of study, to administer the affairs of that branch of the public service with great energy and success. Mr. Delano, the new Commissioner of Internal Revenue, is making himself familiar with the wants and necessities of that important branch of administration, and will soon be in a condition to apply all the reforms which it requires.

All the departments are greatly embarrassed, as is unavoidable at the outset of a new administration, by the multitude of applications for office. All the Secretaries have caused it to be understood that they do not intend to enter upon any sweeping system of removals, and that officers throughout the country whose record of service proves them to have been faithful and efficient in the discharge of their duties will not be disturbed. This course is not only just in itself, but is absolutely essential to the progress of public business in any of the departments.

Considering the difficulties and embarrassments encountered by General Grant at the outset of his administration, it is rather matter of surprise that they have been so promptly and so thoroughly surmounted. Every department of the Government is already in vigorous and successful operation, and everything, in all of them, goes on with smooth and steady success.

General Longstreet's Appointment.

As was to be expected, considerable hostility is manifested to the appointment of ex-General Longstreet, of the Confederate army, to a high office in New Orleans. It seems to be in the main confined to the Union men of the South—those, that is, who claim to have been Union men throughout the war. They say it is unjust to those who never at

any time favored the Rebellion, that their claims should be set aside in favor of those who became Union men only after their utmost efforts to overthrow the Union had failed. However zealous General Longstreet may have been in support of the Union since the suppression of the Rebellion, he was still, during all that struggle, one of the most zealous and efficient generals of the Rebel army; and he ought now to wait until the merits of those who sacrificed everything in support of the Union, while he was endeavoring to destroy it, have been recognized and rewarded.

Looking at the matter as one of strict justice, it is not easy to question the truth of this statement of the case. But General Grant evidently regards the action taken rather with reference to its effect in allaying resentment and restoring peace to the South, than to conformity to what would seem to be exactly and rigidly just. The work to be done now is a practical one, and the measures adopted are to be judged by their bearing upon it. The very fact that General Longstreet, known to have been one of the foremost generals of the Rebellion, has been appointed to Federal office, on account of the frank manner in which he has accepted the results of the war, and the zeal and sincerity with which he has sought to carry into effect the subsequent action of the Government, will satisfy the South that the war is over, and that it is no longer the policy of the Government to ostracize men for having, while it lasted, been enemies of the Union; but that they will be judged by their conduct since it ended, rather than by the share they took in it while it was going on. This will at once disabuse the Southern mind of apprehensions which have done great mischief to the Union cause in that section, and operate as a strong encouragement to a cordial and effective support of the Government.

The amnesty granted by Mr. Johnson, if not made void either by the action of Congress or of the Courts of law, will open the way to a policy of conciliation of which the appointment of General Longstreet is a good illustration, and which will work a very great change in the temper and prospects of the Southern people.

The Wild Hunt.

There are some fears of Mr. Grant sharing the fate of Aotzou, who was eaten by his own dogs. Advice from Washington represent the noble army of lol as mad and frantic for place. Five hundred out, says one account, are clamoring to supplant one in. Colfax has had to run away, says another account. Still a third has it that members of either house are snowed in with a heavy and still-falling shower of notes, cards, memorials, and letters. Delano is out, in a recent issue of the Times, with a piteous appeal, for God's sake stay away. There is "such an overwhelming avalanche of applications as substantially to block all the business of the department." In one word, it seems that every other man who voted for Grant is in person or by letter urging the wild hunt. And for Grant himself. Poor man, they say it is having some effect even upon him. Drops wear the rock, and even that sultry self-sufficiency, already rudely shaken by the Steward business, is giving way. Like prairie wolves encompassing a crippled buffalo bull, the beggars beseege him. With each new accession the hunger of the rest receives an impetus, and unless some bones be thrown them, they will wear out the bull at last.

Then what will become of us? Our Moses, with his cigar as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, will have gone hence, and who then is to lead us into the promised land? Who let us have peace? Lash 'em off of him, some of the rogues in Washington. Either they will kill him, or they will rob us of our daily blunder, or they will prove that they gave him something some time, and this will rob us of our daily bread.

A Precedent for the Stewart Case.

The nomination, confirmation, and resignation of Mr. A. T. Stewart are already fast passing into the schedule of ancient history, particularly with the administration and its friends, who have no tears to shed over past failures in their anxiety to avoid making new ones. But it may be well to note the fact that Mr. Stewart's case was not without a precedent, were it only for the sake of enforcing the truth that his fitness or unfitness to hold the office for which he was nominated was a question quite as much of propriety as of legality. It is rather odd that this precedent should have been entirely overlooked, at least in the Senate.

President Taylor, shortly after his inauguration, nominated Samuel J. Peters to be Collector of the port of New Orleans. The advocates of the nominee, unlike those of Mr. Stewart, were but little known beyond the limits of the city in which he resided. But they were well known to the then Senator from Louisiana, P. Soule, upon whose suggestion, the nomination was promptly rejected. But the rejection was not placed upon the ground of inelegibility in Mr. Peters. It was deemed improper to place in office a man who might be tempted to abuse it.

Like Mr. Stewart, Mr. Peters had all the legal qualifications requisite in a nominee, and being the leader of the Whig party of New Orleans, possessed of a handsome private fortune, and fired with political ambition, he might well have abandoned his grocery business if the Senate had confirmed him; but that body preferred to act upon the injunction, "Lead us not into temptation."

The Opportunity of a Statesman.

The graceful and wise little speech made the other day by Mr. John C. Breckinridge, on the occasion of his return, after a four years' exile, to his old home, suggests the work for which the country looks to this gentleman, and which, as we hopefully trust, it may yet receive at his hands. Here is a man whose career in the service of the Government was exceptionally successful and brilliant, whose career in warfare upon it was scarcely less conspicuous, and who returns to resume the duties of loyal and faithful citizenship at an age when most men are only reaching the full maturity of their powers. The grandson of the Kentucky Attorney-General, and of one of the earliest United States Senators from Kentucky, he inherited devotion to the public service with his name, and learned the love of the Union with the lessons of his childhood. At twenty-five he was major of a Kentucky regiment in the war with Mexico; at twenty-six he was counsel for General Pillow, in the remarkable difficulties in which that officer was involved; at twenty-eight he was a member of the lower house in the Kentucky Legislature; at thirty he was a Representative in Congress, having defeated in the canvass so popular a Kentuckian as Leslie Combs; at thirty-two he was again returned to Congress after an exciting contest, in which he defeated Gov. Robert Letcher; at thirty-four he was Vice-President of the United States, and at thirty-seven he was the nominee of one wing of the dominant party for the Presidency.

The youngest and most favored man in the country who had ever run such a round of official honors up to the very verge of the highest preferment, he chose, in 1861, to link his fortunes with the section that had earnestly supported him for the Presidency, and entered the Confederate service. At thirty-eight, the man who thirteen years before had served the Government as a soldier on a foreign soil, was a major-general in the army that strove to break up the Government, and at forty-two he was the Secretary of War of the insurgent Confederacy. Then followed a dreary four years of exile, and now, in his forty-ninth year—just at the age when such men are entering upon the full and ripe maturity of their powers—vigorous, and yet capable of a lifetime's work—this soldier of the Mexican war, Congressman, Vice-President, goes back to his native State.

What shall he do to make returns for past honors—what to make amends for past errors? He goes to a State that idolizes him, and finds her, badly pre-empted among all the sister States, brooding over the ashes of the Rebellion, and seeking to nurse the smoldering heat into another flame. She still cherishes hopes of payment for property in human beings, if not of an actual reconversion of them into property. She still denies equality before the law to a large class of her citizens. She still licenses any white ruffian to outrage or murder a negro's wife before his eyes, and refuses to take the negro's testimony against the criminal. To every step in the nation's progress toward freedom, harmony, and peace, she opposes her own resistance. In every possible way, and with an amazing pertinacity, she cherishes, in the midst of the new life of the Republic, the spirit of the slave-hunts, the civilization of the dark ages. Throughout the whole limits of the late Rebellion, there is not to-day a State so rebellious, in spirit or act, as Kentucky. Neutral, so far as she could be, during the war, she is now hostile, as far as she can be, when the whole nation is crying for peace. Yet her favored son is the returned Vice-President of the Union and Secretary of War of the Rebellion. Popular always from his earliest entrance upon public life, he is now far more popular than ever. Heretofore he has been the leader of a party in the State; now he may be, if he choose, the leader of the State.

We hear and believe that Mr. Breckinridge comes back animated only by hopes of union, prosperity, and peace; that he earnestly desires the acceptance, in good faith, of the results of the war as final, the cessation of strife, the growth of fraternal feelings, the dismissal of old animosities of party, and a new political departure; that he forges upon every expression of a desire to renew the struggle for the "lost cause"; and that for himself he looks for no future save in the growing greatness of the nation he once sought to destroy. That nation has freely pardoned him all his errors. Will he not, in return, use his influence in her behalf among these disaffected Kentuckians, who almost worship him, and are sure to follow with enthusiasm wherever he may lead the way? His first appearance in Congress was as the eulogist of Henry Clay. Will he not emulate that great man's fame, take up his mantle, and plead, with an eloquence not unworthy audiences that still remember the silver-tongued Barry of the West, for reconciliation and harmony, and union and peace? We want to see it acknowledged in Kentucky that loyalty to the Union was not a crime, nor even a cause for political disabilities or social ostracism. We want to see the spirit of Rebel lawlessness laid. We want to see the efforts to retain, in the guise of apprenticeship or otherwise, some of the worst features of the system of slavery, abandoned. We want to see the binding effect of the Civil Rights bill frankly and manfully accepted. We want to see negro testimony admitted in the courts, not so better than a white man's, but precisely like a white man's, for whatever the circumstances and the previous character of the witness may show it to be worth.

Above all, we want to see the old spirit of loyalty and devotion to the Union once more the characteristic of this Commonwealth of glorious old Mr. Breckinridge, more than any other citizen, more almost than all her other prominent citizens, can help to bring back his native State to the fidelity of her better days. He is himself the best judge as to the mode in which his influence shall be exerted. "Sager now than in his fortunes," he may well be trusted for that. What the country has a right to expect of him is that in some way, and at the fitting time, he will make this influence felt.

The Internal Revenue Office Clique at Washington.

The new Commissioner of Internal Revenue may be said to have now fairly entered upon the duties of his office, and the country, without respect to party, will with deep interest the course he intends to pursue. One of the first steps, if not the first, which due regard for the public welfare should constrain Mr. Delano to take without unnecessary delay is the complete and efficient re-arranging of the scandalous Harland-Farland clique, which has ruled the office from the hour that Mr. Whitman left his seat as deputy and Mr. Harland succeeded to it. Of all the cliques which govern departments and department bureaus at Washington, none have ruled with so high a hand as this. The compactness of its organization, its uninterrupted success, and its long existence are due to Mr. Rollins' weakness of will and incapacity for judging human character.

This ring has not only carried its poison, since it became its members have held every one of the chief positions in the place; it has forced good men out of the office and brought bad ones in. Holding control of the promoting power, it has even made that possession the means of increasing its strength and prolonging its existence. It has had its favorites, who were advanced over the heads of others in total disregard of justice; and its spies, who were rewarded as that class generally are under similar circumstances. It has hidden rough-shod over the rights and interests of tax-payers, used its authority with arrogance, retaliated in a petty manner upon those who had the spirit to protest against its treatment, and greatly impaired the efficiency of the clerical force of the office by a course that has caused general loss of interest in—and consequent neglect of—the duties of those composing it. Its presence has naturally been contaminating; and thus the circle of corruption and dishonest use of public power for private profit has been gradually widened. Outside considerations, under the relaxing effects of long, untroubled success, have grown so bold that in Philadelphia, a pettifogging lawyer, whose business sagacity was equal to the early establishment of an inside partnership in the office after the formation of the clique, has been heard to openly boast, time and time again, that he could carry any case through the office that had money enough in it; and he has got through doubtful claims and effected compromise of suits upon terms that are a disgrace to the office and a fraud upon the Treasury.

Something of the clique's ramifications and system of working may be gathered from the fact that, when interested assessors and collectors in different quarters detect a heavy case of fraud, all offers of settlement

are rejected, obstacles to compromise are set up, the matter is kept open until the party is induced to place his case in the hands of the lawyer-accomplice, whom he is assured has the influence with the Commissioner necessary to settle it on favorable terms, and then all becomes smooth sailing, obstructions disappear, and the case is closed upon his paying a sum of money, half of which usually goes to the Government, the balance to the clique. The detail-d manner in which such a transaction is carried through from beginning to end is creditable to the unwhisk skill of those conducting it. The connections in this city correspond in extent and kind with the capacities of the place for the class of business sought. It was but the other day we were shown a letter written to a wealthy firm in this city having a large and just claim against the office which reputable and competent counsel at Washington has failed for months past to get allowed, in which it was stated in significant terms that, if the counsel would step aside and agree to divide his fee, the claimants would get their money forthwith. The writer of that paper is an ex-revenue official, who was removed from the service for repeated criminal transactions against the Treasury, and is well known in revenue circles here and at the national capital. He is but one of a band of many who operate clandestinely in the bureau. If Mr. Delano would like to know his name, we can furnish it, together with record proofs of the proposition alluded to.

It is shameful that half-a-dozen unscrupulous individuals should be permitted to take complete and defiant possession of the most important office under the Government, to transact its business in the furtherance of their own interests, in violation of law, sound public policy, and good order; to corrupt and debase its powers, and to keep tax-payers burdened; for this clique has cost the Treasury millions, and it will cost it millions more if it be not promptly overthrown. We look to Mr. Delano to overthrow it. Mr. Orton overthrew it in its very incipency, and scattered its members; but, under the Rollins-Harland administration, they reassembled and reorganized in a new atmosphere that was favorable to their designs. Our tax-paying people have suffered long enough from this illicit organization; it should be strangled, now that we have a man in Mr. Rollins' seat from whom we are told, purification, proper discipline, and efficient administration may be expected.

Let Mr. Delano look to this matter, for the country will hold him strictly responsible for the injuries dealt to its revenue interests—and through those to other interests—by the continued existence of the rascally combination which surrounds him: Let him be careful whom he trusts among those immediately below him in rank whom he met on entering upon his office. They are wary, plausible, and of ripe experience in the ways of cunning. They will, if they can, deceive and use him as they deceived and used his predecessor.

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